

Newark Library Bans Anti-Negro Children's Literature

BY HUGHES ALLISON

NEWARK—This City's Free Public Library, according to a recent statement made by its Director, John Boynton Kaiser, is preparing to adopt a more wholesome policy in connection with anti-Negro books and other similar materials circulated solely among children.

Mr. Kaiser also told this newspaper that the Library's plans will protect freedom of press, speech and inquiry. Materials withdrawn from general circulation among children because of "questionable or undesirable content", he declared, will be placed in a "Sterotype Collection" * * * * "for the reference use of

librarians, teachers, and others interested in childhood education".

Since informed sources say the Newark Public Library possesses enviable national prestige and decisive influence among libraries in the State of New Jersey, actual practice of the announced intentions may have imitative effect elsewhere. The Kaiser statement was made on the afternoon of June 28th during a press conference the Newark Library's highest policy-making administrators and officials held by prearrangement with specially assigned and staff correspondents of the HERALD NEWS.

The background to the Kaiser statement is most

extensive. For more than a decade several individuals had given careful study to all phases of anti-Negro children's literature. Always close to the picture, the local NAACP recently made the subject a principal part of its program. From time to time the Urban League looked into the matter. From its inception the Division Against Discrimination has been involved in a number of investigations connected with the issue. Early in May of this year the HERALD NEWS brought the issue to a climax when it asked library authorities to state publically its position on the question.

A long period of investigation and research, pre-facing this newspaper's request, revealed the following:

- (1) The Newark Public Library system contains nine physical areas especially set aside for the use of juvenile borrowers. Covering the whole of the City, these particular areas are termed Children's Rooms. They are supervised by trained professionals generally called Children's Librarians. They hold, however, the Civil Service title, Senior Librarians, Education and Children's Department.
- (2) In the past, young borrowers have had unlimited access to anti-Negro books, pictures and phono-

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graph records in most of the NPL's Children's Rooms.

(3) At issue were more than thirty books, an untold number of pictures and drawings, and at least three albums of phonograph-records.

(4) These anti-Negro materials are intended for children of all ages, including infants whose literary diet is confined to nursery rhymes to be read to them by adults.

(5) The objectionable materials contain such obvious derisions as "nigger", "darky", "pick-aninny", "Sambo", etc.

(6) Text-situations picture Negroes as inherently inferior, lazy, incompetent, clowns, and doomed to the economy of domestic servants, menials and field-hands.

(7) Stories dealing with the Slave Era and the Reconstruction Period are slanted and—or



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colored to prove to children that "good" Negroes were content to be slaves while those who sought to escape bondage slavery were "bad" and—or "misguided" Negroes.

(8) Constantly and consistently glorified is the obnoxious and obscene character known as the "Black Mammy".

(9) Numerous stories, by using one or another literary device, make the "Southern Idea"—white supremacy, segregation, etc.—attractive and—or desirable as a race-relations pattern without at the same time including the fact that there has always been and that there is now and that there will continue to be a fierce war waged against every aspect of Jim Crow.

Additional Herald News research revealed that few adults were aware of the extent and scope of anti-Negro literary materials for children. Interviews with numerous librarians disclosed that they thought themselves above question and immune to criticism. Further, these interviews brought to light the fact that there were Negro professional librarians who, whether or not conscious of it, were speaking and acting in a fashion usual-

ly identified with the conduct of "Uncle Toms".

This newspaper also found numerous people who honestly and sincerely feared that any step taken to correct objectionable materials for children would amount to censorship which would injure freedoms of press, speech and inquiry. However, Herald News investigation found that some individuals who cried censorship were using their cry to becloud the real issue.

On May 16, 1951, this newspaper assigned a correspondent to confer with James E. Bryan, the NPL's First Assistant Director and public relations representative. On that date an agenda for a press conference was set up.

Herald News correspondents arrived at the place of the conference bringing with them two large bags full of exhibits directly connected with the entire range of anti-Negro materials for juveniles. There was little need, these reporters soon discovered, to produce more than a few exhibits since NPL authorities proved themselves able to indicate intention to practice a more wholesome policy incident to objectionable juvenile literature.

Representing the Library in addition to the Director, Mr. Kaiser, were Dr. Samuel Hamilton, President of the Board of Trustees; Dr. Edward A. Wright, an Assistant Director and Personnel Officer; Miss Katherine Sherwood, Supervising Librarian, Education and Children's Department; and Miss Dorothy McGinniss, Principal Librarian, Education and Children's Department.

Dr. Harold A. Lett, Assistant Director of the Division Against Discrimination, and one of those intimately familiar with the issue's history and background, attended the conference as an observer.

As the conference got under way, Dr. Hamilton raised the question of censorship. When he was later shown an exhibit of the objectionable literature intended solely for circulation among children under high school age, the Board President graciously admitted that the freedoms, censorship would certainly damage, were not in danger. Further, it was shown that children under high school age were confined entirely to the facilities set aside for them by the Library except when given special permission to use the institution's adult departments.

The Permit

In order for a child to leave a Children's Room and gain access to an adult department, this newspaper learned, the juvenile borrower must state the specific subject he desires as well as his name, whereupon, the Children's Librarian judges and decides the reasonability of the request. If the decision is favorable, it was developed, the Children's Librarian



History was made when the Vet's Reconditioning Softball team of Orange won the city championship. It was the first time a sepiat softball team accomplished this feat. Pictured above, are the men who sparked the team to its historic victory. Irving Overby, manager, is flanked on either side by Ben Lawson and James Currie, co-captains of the "Vets"—American League Champions of 1951 in the city of Orange.

ian dates and signs a special piece of stationary, known as a "Permit For Adult Department", which the child must produce while being serviced in sections reserved for grownups.

Mr. Kaiser was asked if such a "permit" were not indicative of censorship directed at children. Denying that the "permit" constituted censorship, he said that the matter was merely a standard library practice used as an instrument with which to protect the child against contact with materials outside of and beyond his mental development and sense of judgment. Mr. Kaiser added, however, that the existence of the "permit" practice was indicative of "limitations and restrictions" placed upon a child's physical access to certain books. He went on to say that under no circumstances would the Library permit a child to have access to books with an obvious sex-content.

Earlier, this writer had asked NPL conference representatives to produce books and—or other materials intended solely for children in which other groups beside colored peoples were subjected to derisions and obviously objectionable philosophies. No one of the Library's authorities present was able to name a single title in which such derisions as "Wop", "Dago", "Kike", etc., occurred. Nor was there any response involving a children's book in which other groups were the subjects of undemocratic philosophies.

When this newspaper had asked about the "permit" situation, Mr. Kaiser had said "I think I know where you are going". Told that the immediate objective incident to the "permit" practice was "to lay a foundation" for subsequent questions whose answers would determine a library's moral and—or legal responsibility in regard to anti-Negro literature for juveniles, Mr. Kaiser admitted the need for establishing that basis and approach.

Developments, however, made it needless to raise the issue of infringement upon the "equal protection of the law" clause contained in the Federal Constitution's 14th Amendment. Mr. Kaiser handed this newspaper a folder containing a draft of the Library's intended program in connection with objectionable children's literature. Dated June 27th, 1951, which was just one day before conference time, the draft is called, "Preliminary Tentative Report Of Committee On Standards For The Selection Of Children's Books In The Field Of Human Relations".

Signed by members of a Kaiser appointed committee, including Lewis Graves, Gladys Leonard, Beatrice Schein, Harriet Spottiswoode, Ed A. Wight and Dorothy McGinniss, Chairman, the "Ten-

tative Report" contains many features which those active in the issue have long claimed would correct the circulation of anti-Negro books among young and impressionable children. In time the Herald News will publish a running commentary on this "Report". Other important data will also be included.

Try This Test

BALTIMORE — The National Committee on Alcohol Hygiene, Inc., offered a test today to help "social drinkers" and others find out whether they are turning into alcoholics.

The organization said that any person answering "yes" to any of the following questions "may be" an alcoholic.

"If you answer 'yes' to any two," it said, "the chances are that you are an alcoholic." Three or more "yesses" and you are "definitely alcoholic."

The questions:

- Do you lose time from work due to drinking?
- Is drinking making your home life unhappy?
- Do you drink because you are shy with other people?
- Is drinking affecting your reputation?
- Have you ever felt remorse after drinking?
- Have you gotten into financial difficulties as a result of drinking?
- Do you turn to lower companions and inferior environment when drinking?
- Does your drinking make you careless of your family's welfare?
- Has your ambition decreased since drinking?
- Do you crave a drink at a definite time daily?
- Do you want a drink the next morning?
- Does drinking cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
- Has your efficiency decreased since drinking?
- Is drinking jeopardizing your job or business?
- Do you drink to escape from worries and trouble?
- Do you drink alone?
- Have you ever had a complete loss of memory as a result of drinking?
- Has your physician ever treated you for drinking?
- Do you drink to build up your self-confidence?
- Have you ever been sent to a hospital or institution on account of drinking?

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